

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 4-6, 10-15, 19, and 21 were pending as of the action mailed on May 17, 2005.

Claims 1, 5, 19, and 21 are being amended. Reexamination and reconsideration of the action are requested in light of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Section 102

Claims 1, 4, 5, 10, 12, 19, and 21 were rejected as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,278,975 ("Brandt"). The applicant respectfully traverses the rejection.

As amended, claim 1 recites a device that includes an interface with an input channel that is configured to be coupled to a mechanical input device. A speech interface receives voice commands and provides command signals to a select channel to control the switching of the input channel between first and second output channels, where each output channel is configured to be coupled to a respective surgical apparatus. When the mechanical input device is coupled to the input channel, the mechanical input device is operable to control either a first surgical apparatus or a second surgical apparatus depending on the command signals from the speech interface.

Brandt discloses a voice command and control system that can be interfaced with a piece of medical equipment. As described in Brandt, without the voice command and control system, device selection and control are both performed mechanically (i.e., by pushing buttons). With the voice command and control system, buttons on the piece of medical equipment are bypassed such that device selection and control are both performed by voice command. Brandt does not suggest or disclose a device that includes a speech interface that controls the switching of an input channel such that when a mechanical input device is coupled to the input channel, the mechanical input device controls a first surgical apparatus or a second surgical apparatus. By suggesting that the surgeon use only his voice to select and control the piece of medical equipment and bypass the buttons, Brandt teaches away from the device recited in claim 1.

For at least the foregoing reasons, claim 1 and claim 4, which depends from claim 1, are allowable over Brandt.

As amended, claim 5 recites a surgical system that includes an interface with an input channel that is coupled to a mechanical input device. The interface includes first and second output channels that are coupled to first and second surgical apparatus, respectively. The surgical system includes a speech interface that receives voice commands and controls the switching of the input channel between the first and second output channels such that the mechanical input device controls the first surgical apparatus or the second surgical apparatus.

Claim 5 and claims 10 and 12, which depend from claim 5, are allowable over Brandt for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

As amended, claim 19 recites a method that includes providing an interface with an input channel that is coupled to a mechanical input device. The interface includes first and second output channels that are coupled to first and second surgical apparatus, respectively. The method includes switching the interface in response to a first voice command so that the input channel is coupled to the first output channel and the mechanical input device controls the first surgical device. The method also includes switching the interface in response to a second voice command so that the input channel is coupled to the second output channel and the mechanical input device controls the second surgical device.

Brandt does not suggest or disclose the steps of providing an interface with an input channel that is coupled to a mechanical input device, switching the interface in response to a first voice command so that the input channel is coupled to the first output channel and the mechanical input device controls the first surgical device, and switching the interface in response to a second voice command so that the input channel is coupled to the second output channel and the mechanical input device controls the second surgical device. For at least this reason, claim 19 is allowable over Brandt.

As amended, claim 21 recites a method that includes receiving a control input from a mechanical input device and a voice selection command. The voice selection command is converted to a command signal, and the control input is switched, responsive to the command signal, to one of a first surgical apparatus or a second surgical apparatus to allow for control of the respective surgical apparatus using the mechanical input device.

Brandt does not suggest or disclose receiving a control input from a mechanical input device and a voice selection command, converting the voice selection command to a command signal, and switching the control input, responsive to the command signal, to one of a first surgical apparatus or a second surgical apparatus to allow for control of the respective surgical apparatus using the mechanical input device. For at least this reason, claim 21 is allowable over Brandt.

Section 103

Claim 2 was rejected as allegedly unpatentable over Brandt in view of Wolf et al. "Student Reference Manual for Electronic Instrumentation Laboratories." The applicant respectfully traverses the rejection.

Claim 2 depends from claim 1 and is allowable for at least the same reasons.

Claims 6, 11, and 13-15 were rejected as allegedly unpatentable over Brandt in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,788,999 to Green. The applicant respectfully traverses the rejection.

Claims 6, 11, and 13-15 depend from claim 5 and are allowable for at least the same reasons.

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Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, the applicant submits that all the claims are in condition for allowance.

By responding in the foregoing remarks only to particular positions taken by the Examiner, the applicant does not acquiesce with other positions that have not been explicitly addressed. In addition, the applicant's arguments for the patentability of a claim should not be understood as implying that no other reasons for the patentability of that claim exist.

Enclosed is a check in the amount of \$120 for the one-month Petition of Extension of Time fee pursuant to 37 CFR §1.136. Please apply any charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

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